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ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

# ADULT EDUCATION

## A POSITION PAPER

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THE ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

The ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION
represents 94 public boards of education of all sizes and
from all regions of the province which serve
over 1,700,000 students and adult learners.
OPSBA speaks for public education in Ontario
and represents the interests of public school trustees
to the government, the public and the media.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This position paper was prepared by the OPSBA Task Force on Adult Continuing Education:

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## I. PREFACE

> "Education needs to transform itself from a strictly youth oriented institution to one that serves the needs of a growing number of adults."

A growing number of adults, for a variety of reasons, are returning to school. To guarantee opportunities for lifelong learning on a systematic basis, OPSBA believes that school boards should be given a clear mandate to provide these services.

School boards throughout their histories have played a pivotal role in the provision of life-long learning opportunities for adults. Most of the difficulties encountered by school boards when providing for adult education programs, however, relate to the lack of a clear understanding of the role of adult education in our society and, more specifically, to the marginal status of these programs within the mandate of school boards.

Until these issues have been adequately addressed, more specific concerns related to the provision of these programs will continue to be dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

After outlining the fundamental principles OPSBA feels should guide the development of a policy statement on both the role of adult education in our society and its funding, this position paper will discuss some of the unique characteristics of adult education as they relate to program delivery, assessment and evaluation, teacher training, wrap-around services and linkages.

Although current concerns and problems will be documented, emphasis will be on the development of provincial options and alternatives which reflect our belief statements. No one solution is appropriate for all school boards. **There must be flexibility so that individual boards can develop and implement programs which best meet their community needs.** Adult continuing education programs have tended to provide the "cutting edge" in curriculum and program innovation. They have traditionally tended to be less structured, more experimental and quick to respond to the special needs of its learners both in terms of subject matter offered, program delivery, teaching methods and learner participation. These unique characteristics must be maintained.

For the purposes of this position paper, OPSBA is limiting itself to an examination of adult education only, whether this education is delivered through regular day school or through continuing education. Those programs within adult education which are being examined include credit programs, English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL), adult basic literacy and numeracy (ABL/ABN), citizenship courses and general interest courses (GI).

## II. MANDATE

School boards have unique characteristics which make them the logical place for the provision of adult education. They, and their communities, also have a lot to gain by becoming involved in these services.

### School Board Involvement in Adult Education

Throughout their histories, school boards in Ontario have, to varying degrees, made provision for adult students. In the 1950s and 1960s school boards were the primary providers of technical and vocational programs for adults and young people. With the establishment of the colleges of applied arts and technology in 1968, many school boards reduced or abandoned their programs for adults, and many of their programs were transferred to the colleges. Since then the pattern of participation by boards has been varied.

In 1982, the Ministry of Education discontinued financing for non-credit learning (General Interest Courses) in elementary and secondary schools in the province. This decision had a impact on both adult enrolment in non-credit courses and in the provision of adult continuing education programs in general.

Since these two major changes, the pattern of participation by boards in adult education has been varied but there has been a steady increase in both the number of school boards offering programs and the number of adults participating in these programs.

It is difficult to document accurately the increase in educational services provided to adults by school boards because adults may be registered either as regular day school students or as continuing education students in the daytime or at night. The statistics gathered, and reported by the province, are inadequate. No matter how the statistics are analyzed, however, the increasing number of adults served by school boards is significant. Furthermore, the size of the education service to adults indicates that it should no longer be considered a marginal activity. Thomas and Klaiman (1989) estimated that adults represent approximately 20% of the total number of credit students in secondary schools.

In 1989, 92 out of 122 school boards offered continuing education credit or correspondence self-study programs, 67 offered adult literacy/numeracy, 62 offered English as a Second Language; and 23 offered Citizenship classes.

In 1988-89, about 55,000 adults (nineteen years of age and over) were enroled in secondary day schools compared with 48,999 in 1987-88 and 41,600 in 1986-87. Enrolment in

Continuing Education credit or correspondence/self-study courses was 267,000. It was also estimated that a further 186,000 "adults" were enroled in Adult Basic Education programs.

To support this enrolment, the financial commitment of the Ministry of Education through continuing education grants alone, is considerable. In 1988-89 the Ministry spent $50.4 million in grants to support all categories of continuing education directed at adults through school boards. The Ministry's estimate for 1990 is $59.4 million grant dollars.

**Importance of Adult Continuing Education in the 1990's**

It is not surprising that a growing number of adults are returning to school. Technological change requires continuous upgrading of skills and constant retraining. Initial education can no longer be considered adequate for a lifetime career.

Due to increased technological advances, considerably higher levels of literacy are required. A recently published Statistics Canada study conducted in October 1989 revealed 38% of Canadians have some difficulty understanding everyday reading material or writing a letter to a company requesting appliance repairs. Illiteracy costs Canadian society as a whole $10.7 billion a year. The Federal Task Force Report on Employment Opportunities for the 1980s, linked illiteracy with poverty, racism and crime. If these problems are to be addressed, it is essential that the province develop a policy framework which will guarantee the existence of well-established, easily accessible opportunities for second-chance education on a continuous basis.

Without easy access to training and renewal of general education, a high rate of unemployment will continue to co-exist with shortages of skilled workers. To meet the urgent need of a highly skilled workforce capable of learning new skills and to avoid under-education, action is required simultaneously on two fronts:

- A higher percentage of students must be persuaded to complete their initial education at the secondary level; and

- The secondary schools must be readily accessible for anyone wishing to complete a secondary school diploma at any age.

Whatever is done for low achievers within the school system, some remedial programs following school will always be necessary. Although business and other employers must be expected to provide training opportunities for their employees, the government must take

responsibility for providing general education and training for the under-employed who need a broad-based education before they can benefit from specific training for jobs.

Changing demographics and changing community needs have a direct bearing on the need for adult education programs and school boards have had to change their thinking in terms of who they are serving.

Adult education programs serve adults who are returning to school to complete their high school education, or preparing to re-enter the workforce. Adult education programs serve immigrants who are improving their English language skills and learning about Canadian culture. They serve senior citizens who need educational leisure activities. They serve the large number of women who have been out of the labour market for child-rearing purposes and are ready to re-enter the workforce. Other at risk populations which are in need of special advocacy include adult disabled, prisoners and natives.

To guarantee the provision of second-chance education at the secondary level on a systematic basis, OPSBA believes that not only are there are compelling reasons for giving the school system a clearer mandate to provide this service but both school boards and communities benefit from this service.

**Why Adult Education in School Boards?**

As has been shown, school boards can, do and should play an important role in the provision of services to adults in this province. Several facts give school boards both special advantages and special responsibilities in the delivery of adult continuing education and include:

- Facilities are available in communities throughout the province. In some communities, schools are the only educational facility available. Because of the universality of elementary and secondary education and therefore the availability of schools in all parts of the province, school board adult education programs are accessible to almost all adult learners. Only when all adults have accessibility to the programs they require will Ontario have provided equal educational opportunity for life-long learning.

- The school system is the only vehicle through which the government can make its philosophy of "life-long learning" a reality. The reality requires that learners who stepped out of formal education can step back in.

- The school system is the only source of the Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma. This diploma is a prerequisite required by many employers and post-secondary educational institutions.

- Most school systems have administrative and instructional personnel already available, together with support services.

- School boards already have an excellent record in serving disadvantaged adults. Adult Education programs contribute to increased self-esteem and self-confidence in adults returning to education. The school and school system is often equipped to provide necessary support services such as childcare and counselling.

- Many school boards have the flexibility necessary to respond quickly to new or changing community needs for adult programs.

- School boards have established credibility with many adult learners within school communities.

- School boards are the only group that have locally elected individuals responsible to the community and, as a locally elected body, schools can be, and are, particularly sensitive to the growing demands for educational opportunities for adults.

School boards and communities have a great deal to gain by providing adult continuing education including:

- The education of adolescents is improved by what is learned by teachers in teaching adults and administrators in organizing these programs. Adult continuing education programs tend to provide the "cutting edge" in curriculum innovation and program design. The creative and innovative approaches to teaching indicative of adult programs will benefit all students.

- Adult voluntary learners provide positive role models for teenaged students.

- Improved educational levels of parents contribute to the school success of children and adolescents.

- Adult education programs allow taxpayers who do not have children in school an opportunity for direct benefit from the payment of property taxes. Adults who have the most positive view of the performance of our schools are those who have some direct contact with them.

- Locally elected school boards are a mechanism for responding to community needs, and for accountability to adult learners as well as taxpayers in general. Involvement in adult education will improve school-community relations by strengthening two way communication.

- By providing educational opportunities to poor parents who are often poorly educated, the school board can contribute to the breaking of the poverty cycle.

- The provision of adult learning opportunities directly contributes to the economic development of the local community.

- The provision of adult education and training opportunities by school boards contributes to an effective partnership between educational institutions, business and industry.

- The increased need for retraining opportunities for adults requires school boards to offer appropriate programs in order that Ontario's workforce is to remain productive and competitive. Businesses benefit from upgrading of the workforce.

**Provincial Framework**

The best results for providing lifelong learning opportunities will come when this can be done within the framework of provincial policy, organization and funding. Until the central questions of the fundamental role of school boards in the provision of adult education and the rights of the adult learner are dealt with by the government, questions related to funding, program, wrap-around services and personnel will continue to be inadequately addressed.

School boards have taken a leadership role in providing adult education in a vacuum in which there is no clear Ministry of Education policy on the role of adult education and its relevance. There is currently no provincial model within which the role of adult and continuing education can be placed and understood.

The Ministry of Education is currently reviewing the provision of education in this province. These "restructuring initiatives" include reviews of the early years, the formative years, the transition years, and the specialization years. Teacher education and technological education as they relate to these years are also being assessed. There is no concurrent examination of the role of adult education in this province.

OPSBA argues that all of these issues must be addressed together. There must first be an overall framework which clearly states the goals of education and outlines the role of schools in society and what they are to achieve. Within this framework discussions on the various segments of education, including adult education, can take place.

In order to assist in the development of this framework, and more specifically the role of adult continuing education within an overall educational framework, there is the need for broad-based consultation with all the partners in education. There needs to be clarification of the relative mandates of the various Ministries and agencies in the provision of adult education in this province.

A model for this consultation process has already been proposed by OPSBA in its discussion paper, A Model for Consultation on Education Finance. Within this consultation model, which includes the development of a education framework, OPSBA recommends that

> [1] **The province develop a comprehensive policy for adult education which includes the right of adults to receive, from school boards, services that are designed to meet their educational needs. In order to provide for clarification of relative mandates, policy discussions must cross inter-Ministerial boundaries.**

The following guiding principles should form the basis for the development of a comprehensive policy on adult continuing education in Ontario. OPSBA believes that...

- Adults have the right to opportunities for lifelong learning.

- School boards through the Education Act and Regulations have been given the principal role for the delivery of elementary and secondary programs for adults.

- School boards can, do, and should play a central role in the provision of adult continuing education programs.

- Adults have the right of easy, systematic and appropriate access to these programs with appropriate support services.

- Adult education programs must be adequately funded.

- Decisions regarding adult education must be made in the best interest of the learner and should include adult learning principles and flexible programs which meet their needs.

Equity of Access

School boards have a legitimate and necessary role to play in the provision of educational services for adults. Although some school boards are extensively involved in adult education, and provide flexible, responsive continuing education programs; the extent of involvement is sporadic and the provision of adult education programs by school boards varies across the province. This is partly due to the current permissive nature of the legislation regarding adult education. An examination of the 1988 education enrolment figures, board by board, indicates that the Ontario Association of Continuing Education (OACE) analysis of the 1985 enrolment figures still hold true:

> "the size of the board, its geographical location within the province, and the population mix between rural and urban areas were not the determining factors as to whether adult continuing education was available through school boards. Rather, it was factors within boards themselves that were responsible for both the services provided and the quality of those services. As a result, Ontario's adults did not have equal access to an education throughout the province."

Restrictions on the school day, the school year, the lack of wrap-around services such as child care and transportation, inadequate counselling for an adult clientele, teachers without training in andragogy (art and science of helping adults learn), curriculum materials designed for younger students and a school milieu in which they do not feel welcome are all barriers to equity of access for adult students.

If school boards are to be key players in the provision of adult continuing education then they must provide reasonable access to opportunities for life-long learning in their communities on the basis of need. OPSBA recommends that:

**[2] Reasonable access to Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult continuing education credit courses be mandated on the basis of need and appropriately funded by the Ministry of Education.**

Adult Basic Education includes English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL), adult basic literacy and numeracy (ABL/ABN) and citizenship courses.

Within the general requirement of providing opportunities for lifelong learning on the basis of need, it is essential that school boards retain their existing local autonomy in the delivery of adult continuing education so that they can respond to the local needs of adult learners. There must be flexibility and a variety of options which include the ability to purchase the program from other agencies and/or cooperative arrangements with co-terminous school boards, community agencies and colleges.

To facilitate cooperation and coordination at the local level, OPSBA recommends that:

**[3] The province encourage the establishment of local adult education councils with representation from all funded delivery agencies.**

If adult continuing education is to lose its marginal status in Ontario, the government must also structure itself to give greater consideration to adult issues. To assist the government in providing for adult education and to help coordinate the various ministries involved in adult and continuing education, OPSBA recommends that

**[4] The government establish an Advisory Council on Adult Continuing Education.**

## III. FUNDING

The provision of adult continuing education programs by school boards is, to a large extent, determined by the financial arrangements for these programs.

Many of the difficulties currently faced by school boards with regard to the funding of adult continuing education programs stem from the lack of any comprehensive Ministry policy on the role of adult continuing education in this province and the role of school boards in its provision. As a result, the funding of these programs has been ad hoc in nature. Funding decisions are being made without consideration of equity issues or recognition of the unique needs of adults.

Financial decisions cannot be made in isolation from policy decisions.

It has already been recommended that the government undertake a comprehensive review of the role of adult continuing education in this province. An additional component of this review must be a review of the funding of these programs. **The rights of adults to receive services cannot be guaranteed unless there is an obligation, on the part of the government, to ensure that adequate funding is provided.**

OPSBA recommends that

> [5] **The government, through a broad-based consultation process, develop a comprehensive model of education finance which recognizes adult continuing education as a legitimate component of education in this province.**

OPSBA believes that the following guiding principles should form the basis for the development of any comprehensive model for the financing of adult continuing education for school boards:

- There should be equity of funding between day school programs and adult continuing education programs.

- The funding of adult continuing education should be based on the same criteria as the regular day school system, but funding must also take into account the unique needs and circumstances of the adult learner.

- There must be coordination and consistency in funding by other Ministries, the federal government and other educational sources. School boards should be able to participate fully in federal funding.

**Equity in Funding**

During the consultation process, the principle of equity in funding requires an examination of definitional concerns, capital issues and open access provisions.

Definitional Concerns

Equity in funding between regular day school programs and adult continuing education programs does not currently exist. Before equity can be assured, definitions must be clarified. OPSBA believes that when developing a funding model there should be no definitional

distinction between day school or adult continuing education students or credits. OPSBA believes that a "student is a student" and "a credit is a credit" regardless of age, time of day, circumstances or participation.

Examples which illustrate the current inequity in funding include the lack of continuing education grants for cooperative education credits for adults; the lack of provincial funding for transportation for adult students; inadequate funding provisions for guidance counselling for adults; and, funding based on student attendance rather than enrolment. For many adults who may be called away on a job, or to a family commitment, funding based on attendance is a problem for school boards. There is the need for greater flexibility to remove this barrier.

All of these issues need to be considered when developing a funding model which ensures equity in financing. More specifically, OPSBA recommends that

**[6] Continuing education grants be available for cooperative credits for adults.**

**[7] Travel allowances for adult learners be recognized by the government as legitimate expenditures and funded appropriately.**

Capital Issues

In addition to questions related to program funding, the provision of capital funding for adult continuing education programs needs to be examined when developing a comprehensive education funding model. There is currently no provision in the general legislative grants for capital funds for buildings for adults or for upgrading and modernizing schools and improving community access to these schools.

Open Access Provisions

Currently, the funding of education is shared between the local tax base and the provincial government. Any examination of the financing of adult continuing education must take into account the question of open access for adult students irrespective of tax base and/or geographic location.

**Unique Needs of the Adult Learner**

In addition to providing equity in funding between regular day school programs and adult continuing education programs; the unique needs of adults must be taken into account. The development of any funding model must provide for flexibility in scheduling and wrap-around services and small class sizes. Many northern, rural and francophone adult education classes could not exist without special provision for small class size.

**Coordination and Consistency of Funding**

There is the need for an examination of the eligibility of school boards to receive funds for adult continuing education from a variety of Ministries and from the federal government. Inconsistent policies, a proliferation of funding sources, and a lack of coordination between various ministries and the federal and provincial governments make it difficult for school boards to easily access required funding.

Although OPSBA believes that the English-as-a-second language and immigration settlement issues are federal-provincial matters, school boards should be able to participate fully in funding from the federal government.

**Recommendations**

If, in the development of a comprehensive education finance model, it is decided that adult education programs are to be funded by a combination of provincial and local funding, then OPSBA recommends that

**[8] Credit programs be funded by the Ministry of Education and the local taxpayer.**

**[9] Adult Basic Education programs be totally funded by the Ministry of Education.**

At present, no government funding is available for general interest courses. In cancelling funding for non-credit interest courses in 1982, the government failed to recognize the unique situation of rural and northern communities in which the only continuing education programs were offered by the schools. Non-credit programs provided by school boards helped foster a sense of community in outlying areas of the province and were an important source of innovation and responsiveness to the needs of the local community.

Through a consultation process there has to be a careful examination of general interest courses which are of benefit to the community. Limited funding of general interest courses on the basis of such factors as community need, demographics and unemployment should be considered. There is a precedent for funding such courses in the community college system and this should be examined. OPSBA recommends that

**[10] The government, in its consultation process, examine the possibility of funding, on a limited basis, general interest courses which benefit the community.**

The OPSBA recommendations on specific funding issues (Recommendations 6-10) are based on our knowledge of current funding arrangements. However, should these funding arrangements change, OPSBA would want an opportunity to carefully examine any new proposals in order to assess their impact on the funding of adult and adult continuing education programs.

## IV. PROGRAM DELIVERY

Some of the key issues facing boards of education in Ontario as they deliver adult programs are that:

- Program delivery must include the incorporation of adult learning principles and the appropriate training of staff.

- Program delivery requires maximum flexibility in adapting to changing learner needs and in responding to a variety of learner needs.

- Program delivery involves learners moving from where they are presently to where they would like to be. This assumes an effective assessment, counselling, and orientation process which is currently not available.

### The Adult Learner

In providing programs for adult students, consideration must be given to the unique needs and learning styles of adults.

Adults are voluntary learners who come to the learning situation with considerable and varied prior experiences. This prior experience is not only a valuable and reliable resource; it must also must be taken into account when determining the appropriate placement of adult learners.

Adults learn best when they are personally involved in the entire learning process. This would include defining their needs, assessing personal competencies, setting goals and objectives, choosing course content, teaching strategies, evaluation tools and resources. With ownership comes commitment. Generally this is established through discussion and negotiation with the teacher.

Adult learners have developed their own learning styles and teachers must recognize that different learning styles exist, be flexible and adopt relevant teaching styles.

There is the need for special training requirements for both teachers and administrators in dealing with the unique characteristics of adult learners.

**Flexible Programming**

Programs for adults must reflect the needs of the adults and be structured in such a way as to provide the kind of education adults both need and want.

A variety of options are available for program delivery for adult students which include all adult schools, all adult classes in day school programs and adults in regular day school classes with other students. All of these options have financial implications as well as implications for the learner. No one option will suit all learners and flexibility in program delivery should be maintained.

Current regulations do not take into account learner needs for more flexible hours. Definitions are based on "full-time" day attendance (between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm). The rationale for 10 month school year is not appropriate for adults "in a hurry". A twelve month school year would allow for maximum flexibility regarding staffing and school use. There is also the need for the development of provisions for continuous intake to keep learners from having to wait. OPSBA recommends that

**[11] Guidelines be established to provide Boards of Education with the autonomy to organize the school day and school year to meet the unique needs of adult students.**

Curricula need to be developed which recognize the differing needs and experience base of adults. The current Ministry of Education requirements regarding credit courses results in an inappropriate focus on ministry guidelines instead of learner needs. There is the need for general guidelines to assist school boards in developing programs which best meet the needs of the adult learner. OPSBA recommends that

**[12] The Ministry of Education develop a circular for adult education similar to The Formative Years (Circular P1J1) and OSIS.**

**Assessment and Evaluation**

Any assessment of the adult student must include guidance, career counselling and program development. A well developed assessment process should include the development of career packages for the adult. Before one can assess and/or monitor a student's progress one must

first try to figure out where a person is starting from and monitor their progress in relation to mutually developed desired outcomes. Initial communication between teacher and student must reflect the objectives of the course or program and outline the methods of evaluation to be used, i.e. self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation.

Ongoing assessment of the adult student could be provided by guidance teachers. However, pre-service and in-service is needed to help these teachers understand the difference in the needs of the adult learner from the regular day-school student.

One of the difficulties in the initial assessment of adult learners is the lack of educational records. There is a need to develop an accessible and equitable system of evaluating the knowledge and skills people have acquired prior to their entering a formal educational program. There is a wide range of learning which should be taken into account. Formal recognition of adults' previous learning and experience is one of the ways of putting life-long learning into everyday practice.

Assessment of prior learning will enable the delivery agency to develop courses and programs of study which best meet the needs of the learner but will also ensure, through the setting of appropriate program goals, that unnecessary and costly repetition of information and programs does not occur. For the individual, prior learning assessment should make a return to formal education a more attractive possibility. OPSBA recommends that

**[13] The Ministry of Education examine the possibility of establishing a General Educational Development Test.**

It is understood that the Ministry of Education, in partnership with school boards, would develop the appropriate assessment instruments for the purposes of providing secondary credits or their equivalent. Any determination of equivalency for secondary education must continue to be the responsibility of the providers of secondary education, namely school boards.

Student Evaluation

In evaluating student performance, direct application of adolescent day school criteria to adults is inappropriate. Evaluation must be based on objectives/outcomes which have been set by the learner and should include a variety of evaluation methods such as self-evaluation, peer evaluation and evaluation of the teacher by the learner.

Although teachers of continuing education credit courses must be certified, few, if any, have received formal training in the principles of evaluating the adult learner. Because of the continuing education funding situation, it is unusual to have evaluation criteria written specifically for adults, or to have teacher in-service in effective instruction and evaluation for adults. OPSBA recommends that

**[14] The Ministry of Education undertake the development of appropriate evaluation strategies and teacher in-service opportunities for adult continuing education programs and/or provide additional funding for individual school boards to develop these services.**

Program Evaluation

In addition to student evaluation, there is the need for an ongoing evaluation of program content, structure and teaching methods. Continuing education programs should be evaluated on the basis of their relevance to the learner.

There should also be feed-back from teachers and students in the Continuing Education programs regarding both relevance of program and method of delivery. If specific program packages have been developed to meet specific career objectives, then the evaluation of these packages should be requested from business and industry as well as students and teachers.

## V. TEACHER ISSUES

There are two fundamental issues that have to be considered when dealing with teachers and adult education: training and contracts.

### Teacher Training

With the exception of one or two Faculties of Education in which a one-session additional qualifications course (A.Q.) is available, adult education teacher education programs are not available through any of our concurrent, pre-service, in-service or A.Q. program options.

"At stake is not the present status of teachers, but the future of the nation." (National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, A Call for Change) The North American educational system was designed to teach students the basic skills needed for an industrial workforce. As we now compete with other post-industrial societies a more sophisticated educational system is needed to ensure a highly educated workforce. Our programs must relate to the necessity of lifelong learning for all. Of necessity, our teaching professionals must be

prepared through a continuum of teacher education to provide appropriate professional services and delivery methods for adults in our society.

Extensive professional development is required for staff to create appropriate learning environments and serve changing student needs. To accomplish this task, the teacher education programs, the Ministry, the Faculties, the Boards, and the Community Colleges, will have to develop more flexible delivery methods for adult learners and provide more comprehensive general and advanced training. School boards and teachers should work together to develop in-service programs that are of benefit to all.

Professional staff must be encouraged to become more involved and provided with regular opportunities for work experience, job exchanges, and A.Q. in-service programs in order to stay current, improve teaching methodology and develop learner centred curriculum and alternative delivery methods.

Theories of adult education should be an integral part of all pre-service education programs. The education of adolescents is improved by what is learned by teachers in teaching adults and the creative and innovative approaches to teaching indicative of adult programs will benefit all students.

**Teacher Contracts**

Although the qualifications of teachers of secondary school credit courses are governed by the regulations, instructors for E.S.L., F.S.L., adult basic education and general interest non-credit courses are not required by law to hold formal qualifications. The present system with the distinction between the two categories of teacher and instructor is supported by OPSBA. The contracts and related remuneration will continue to be an issue which will be dealt with under the funding and the student equality issues.

One of the options that has to be considered and evaluated during the broad-based consultation process for financing adult continuing education is the possibility of flexible programming and integrated scheduling in which "a credit is a credit" and a "teacher is a teacher" issues are examined. More flexible program models in which there are expanded definitions of the school day and the school year will have profound implications for future funding and staffing questions.

**Recommendations**

Since continuing education at all levels and for citizens of all ages will be a fundamental component of both our society and our existence in the global economy, OPSBA recommends the following:

Teacher Training

**[15] The theories of adult education be an integral part of all pre-service education programs.**

**[16] An Adult Education teacher education program and related practicuum be a component of the concurrent teacher education programs, where possible.**

**[17] A.Q. qualification in Adult Education be established, on a regional basis, in recognition of the changing and growing need for adult education in this province. This program should provide for additional qualifications for professional teaching staff in boards, colleges and universities.**

**[18] Non-credit adult education courses be established throughout the province to provide adult education training for continuing education instructors. These courses should be developed jointly by Boards, Faculties and the Ministry.**

**[19] Adult Education be a component of principal and supervisory officer programs. An adult education component would provide essential information and training to assist the administrator to relate to community needs, client needs and professional staff development needs.**

**[20] Boards be responsible for in-service programs which will provide staff with opportunities to discuss program needs, methodologies, delivery methods and share new ideas and materials for improved instruction.**

**[21] Student teachers from faculties of education be provided with opportunities to gain some of their practice teaching experience in adult education.**

Teacher Contracts

**[22] The present system of teacher contracts with the distinction between the two categories of teacher and instructor be maintained.**

## VI. WRAP-AROUND SERVICES and LINKAGES

When considering support services for adult learners, two kinds of services must be considered: those which are part of a full service model and additional "wrap-around" services unique to adults.

Services which are part of the full service model are those services that are currently available for day school students and should also be available for adults. These include such things as student counselling and assessment, special education considerations and transportation.

Additional "wrap-around" support services which are required by adults include such services as the flexible provision of summer child care, after hours child care, student transportation subsidies for adult learners and immigration settlement services. Specific consideration needs to be given to ways and means to allow unemployment insurance benefits to start and/or continue while the adult is attending adult continuing education programs.

It must be emphasized that for adults these wrap-around supports often must come first to create the conditions for an adult even to begin a learning program. It is the common experience of school boards involved in adult continuing education that adults will not start the educational program until wrap-around supports eliminate the many non-educational barriers preventing adults from continuing their education. Support services are necessary and need to funded accordingly.

The provision and funding of wrap-around services is another area in which there is the need for clarification of mandates and coordination between various delivery agencies including the federal and provincial governments. OPSBA recommends that

**[23] Wrap-around services be accepted as legitimate components of, rather than services ancillary to, adult continuing education and be funded accordingly.**

**[24] The government undertake a process to provide clarification of the relative mandates of various governments, ministries and agencies in the provision and funding of wrap-around services.**

### Linkages

A wide variety of government and private agencies are currently involved in the provision of adult continuing education programs in the community. There is the need for a review of the relative roles of these various groups and coordination of services which will best suit the needs of the adult learner.

OPSBA has argued strongly for a pivotal role for school boards in the provision of adult continuing education services. We would reiterate our recommendation for the formation of local adult education councils responsible for the coordination of services.

We reiterate the need for coordination at the provincial and federal levels of government. A number of Ministries are involved in providing funding and support services for adult continuing education programs including Education, Citizenship, Skills Development and Colleges and Universities.

OPSBA supports the government's current initiatives in fostering linkages between school boards and colleges of applied arts and technology. However, current linkage programs are not flexible enough or generic enough to accommodate the adult learner. Linkage programs for adult learners must be broader and there must be more generic linkages which provide for partnerships with a multitude of agencies and Ministries.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

A growing number of adults, for a variety of reasons, are returning to school. To guarantee opportunities for lifelong learning on a systematic basis, OPSBA believes that school boards should be given a clear mandate to provide these services.

School boards can, do and should play a pivotal role in the provision of life-long learning opportunities for adults. However, there are a number of difficulties in providing for these opportunities due to the lack of a clear understanding of the role of adult continuing education in our society and, more specifically, the mandate of school boards in the provision of these programs.

In addition to discussing some of the unique characteristics of adult continuing education as they related to program delivery, assessment and evaluation, teacher training, wrap-around services and linkages; we have argued that before there can be a constructive discussion of the various matters in the delivery of adult continuing education by school boards, three central issues have to be resolved:

- adult continuing education has to be recognized as a legitimate part of the mandate of school boards;

- a comprehensive provincial funding model which includes adult education must be developed;

- co-ordination and cooperation in the provision of adult continuing education programs at the local, provincial and federal levels must take place.

The following OPSBA recommendations were developed to address these key issues. OPSBA recommends that:

Mandate

**[1] The province develop a comprehensive policy for adult education which includes the right of adults to receive, from school boards, services that are designed to meet their educational needs. In order to provide for clarification of relative mandates, policy discussions must cross inter-Ministerial boundaries.**

**[2] Reasonable access to Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult continuing education credit courses be mandated on the basis of need and appropriately funded by the Ministry of Education.**

**[3] The province encourage the establishment of local adult education councils with representation from all funded delivery agencies.**

**[4] The government establish an Advisory Council on Adult Continuing Education.**

Funding

**[5] The government, through a broad-based consultation process, develop a comprehensive model of education finance which recognizes adult continuing education as a legitimate component of education in this province.**

**[6] Continuing education grants be available for cooperative credits for adults.**

**[7] Travel allowances for adult learners be recognized by the government as legitimate expenditures and funded appropriately.**

**[8] Credit programs be funded by the Ministry of Education and the local taxpayer.**

[9] **Adult Basic Education programs be totally funded by the Ministry of Education.**

[10] **The government, in its consultation process, examine the possibility of funding, on a limited basis, general interest courses which benefit the community.**

Program Delivery

[11] **Guidelines be established to provide Boards of Education with the autonomy to organize the school day and school year to meet the unique needs of adult students.**

[12] **The Ministry of Education develop a circular for adult education similar to The Formative Years (Circular P1J1) and OSIS.**

[13] **The Ministry of Education examine the possibility of establishing a General Educational Development Test.**

[14] **The Ministry of Education undertake the development of appropriate evaluation strategies and teacher in-service opportunities for adult continuing education programs or provide additional funding for individual school boards to develop these services.**

Teacher Issues

[15] **The theories of adult education be an integral part of all pre-service education programs.**

[16] **An Adult Education teacher education program and related practicuum be a component of the concurrent teacher education programs, where possible.**

[17] **An A.Q. qualification in Adult Education be established, on a regional basis, in recognition of the changing and growing need of adult education in the province. This program should provide for additional qualifications for professional teaching staff in boards, colleges and universities.**

[18] **Non-credit adult education courses be established throughout the province to provide adult education training for continuing education instructors. These courses should be developed jointly by Boards, Faculties and the Ministry.**

[19] **Adult Education be a component of principal and supervisory officer programs. An adult education component would provide essential information and training to assist the administrator to relate to community needs, client needs and professional staff development needs.**

[20] **Boards be responsible for in-service programs which will provide staff with opportunities to discuss program needs, methodologies, delivery methods and share new ideas and materials for improved instruction.**

[21] **Student teachers from faculties of education be provided with opportunities to gain some of their practice teaching experience in adult education.**

[22] **the present system of teacher contracts with the distinction between the two categories of teacher and instructor be maintained.**

Wrap-Around Services

[23] **Wrap-around services be accepted as legitimate components of, rather than services ancillary to, adult continuing education and be funded accordingly.**

[24] **The government undertake a process to provide clarification of the relative mandates of various governments, ministries and agencies in the provision and funding of wrap-around services.**